



SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXEMPTION FROM REQUIREMENT TO DISPLAY AN EXTERNAL VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION PLATE GUIDANCE

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 The aim of this guidance is to ensure public safety whilst taking a balanced approach to licensing requirements. Its objective is the provision of an exemption to allow “executive vehicles” to operate without displaying external identification plates.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The displaying of the external identification plate on a licensed vehicle and a driver’s badge is important in terms of public safety and reassurance. They indicate to the travelling public that prior to being licensed both the vehicle and the driver have been subjected to checks to ensure their (the public’s) safety.
- 2.2 However, there are occasions when the requirement to display an external identification plate may have the opposite effect in terms of customer safety and could have commercial implications for the operating business. The display of Local Authority licence plates externally may also deter some corporate customers from using the service; and in some circumstances the identification of the vehicle as a licensed vehicle may allow “high risk” passengers to be more readily targeted putting both them and the driver at risk.
- 2.3 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 requires that private hire vehicles display an identification plate (licence plate) and drivers of those vehicles wear a driver’s badge. The same legislation also allows South Kesteven District Council to exempt vehicles from the need to display an identification plate and, where that exemption applies, the requirement to wear a private hire driver’s badge.
- 2.4 It is not intended that all private hire vehicles licensed by South Kesteven District Council should be exempt from the Council’s requirement to display an external identification plate, however the Council recognises that there may be circumstances when it would be appropriate for vehicles operating this type of service, to be considered suitable for such an exemption.
- 2.5 In creating its guidance, South Kesteven District Council does not seek to provide a definitive list of vehicles it considers to be suitable (subject to use) for exemption from the requirement to display external identification plates.

2.6 This guidance provides information to potential applicants on the standards of vehicle comfort and equipment that the Council considers should be the minimum standard of comfort and vehicle type before the Authority would consider such an application. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Councils existing policy relating to private hire vehicles and establishes additional criteria that the Council (and its officers) will take into account when determining applications for a private hire vehicle to be exempt from displaying external identification plates.

3. The Guidance

3.1 Exemptions from displaying external identification plates (vehicle licence plates) may be in respect of individual vehicles only. Applications for exemptions relating to a fleet of vehicles will not be allowed.

3.2 Each application will be assessed on its own merit and each vehicle will be inspected by an authorised council officer to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

3.3 Applications for exemption from the requirement to display an external identification plate on the rear of a private hire vehicle may be considered where the following requirements are met;

- a) Vehicle models must be either four door saloons, or five door estates or five door hatchbacks. Applications will not normally be accepted in respect of people carrier type vehicles.
- b) Vehicles must be of a high standard of comfort and equipped to a level equal to or above luxury brands of vehicles such as “S” and “E” Class Mercedes Benz, 7 Series BMW, Lexus “GS” or “LS” models, Audi A8 series, Jaguar, Rolls Royce and Bentley saloons. (The highest specification executive type cars from other manufacturers may also be considered).
- c) The vehicle will be in pristine condition with no visible defects, dents or blemishes to the external bodywork or internal trim and seating.
- d) The type of work undertaken is “executive” in nature. This means that the vehicle is used specifically to provide transport under a contract to a company or person, or by the type of clients who for security or personal safety reasons would not want the vehicle to be identifiable.

3.4 Applications may only be made by a person holding a private hire operator’s licence issued by South Kesteven District Council.

3.5 Where a proprietor wishes to make an application for a vehicle to be exempt from displaying an external identification plate they will be required to complete the appropriate application form. The application form will be accompanied by documentation that supports the application and the application fee; which will be non-refundable.

3.6 The Council may require applicants to provide any additional documentation as reasonably necessary to allow the Council to make an informed decision. Where such documentation is not provided to the satisfaction of the Council the application will be refused.

- 3.7 South Kesteven District Council is entitled to recover its costs relating to the administration of applications for an exemption notice and the issue of the exemption notice where applications are granted and may charge such fees as it believes are appropriate to recover all or part of those costs.
- 3.8 The fee to accompany an application for an exemption notice is £30 and is non refundable.
- 3.9 Where an application is granted and a vehicle is exempted from displaying its external identification plate an exemption notice will be issued as soon as practical after the decision is made.
- 3.10 Where a vehicle is exempted from the requirement to display an external identification plate the vehicle will also be exempted from the need to display the internal identification plate.
- 3.11 Irrespective of when an exemption notice is granted the initial exemption notice will expire on the same day as the expiration of the vehicles current private hire licence, unless it is otherwise surrendered or revoked. Thereafter any renewed exemption notice will last for a period of time that is coterminous with that vehicle's private hire licence unless either the licence or notice is otherwise surrendered or revoked.
- 3.12 Exemption notices may be renewed annually subject to the vehicle under going a re-inspection by a Licensing Officer to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose. The annual renewal fee for an exemption notice will be £20 and is non-refundable.
- 3.13 The authority to determine any application for an exemption notice is by virtue of this guidance delegated to the Council's Licensing Officer(s).
- 3.14 In the event of an applicant being dissatisfied with the decision of the officer, the applicant may make a written application for a review of the decision by the Licensing Committee.
- 3.15 Other than where to do so would conflict with the requirements of this guidance, all vehicles granted an exemption notice must, in addition to the requirements of this guidance, comply with the requirements for private hire vehicles contained within the Councils Information – Taxi and Private Hire Licensing document and the Council's Bye Laws.
- 3.16 THE BELOW CONDITIONS APPLY TO ALL PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES GRANTED AN EXEMPTION BY SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL FROM THE REQUIREMENT TO DISPLAY AN EXTERNAL IDENTIFICATION PLATE, AND ARE IN ADDITION TO THE CRITERIA AND CONDITIONS SET OUT IN SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCILS INFORMATION – TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY AND THE COUNCILS BYE LAWS.**
- a) The identification plate and exemption notice provided by the Council pursuant to requirements of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 shall remain the property of the Council

- b) Any vehicle granted an exemption from displaying an external identification plate will be required to have the identification plate normally displayed on the rear of the vehicle, affixed to the inside of the boot lid. The plate when so affixed **must** be readily visible when that boot lid is raised.
- c) In the event of loss or damage rendering such plate or notice unserviceable the proprietor shall make immediate application for a replacement for which a fee is payable.
- d) The exemption notice issued by the Council will be carried in the vehicle at all times and will be produced upon request to an authorised officer of the Council or any Police Officer.
- e) When issued with an exemption notice, the vehicle will not be required to display any other signs (including the internal identification plate) which the Council may at any time require private hire vehicles to display.
- f) The proprietor will not display in on or from the vehicle any advertisement, signage, logos or insignia advertising the operating company or the vehicles status as a private hire vehicle.
- g) During the period of the exemption notice, the driver shall not be required to wear the private hire driver's identification badge but will have it available for immediate inspection by the authorised officer of the Council or any Police Officer on request.
- h) During the period of the exemption notice the driver of the vehicle whilst engaged on private hire work will be smartly dressed in for example, a formal chauffeur or business suit with collar and tie.
- i) The proprietor shall within 1 working day notify the Council of any change in the use of the vehicle.
- j) The proprietor shall not use the vehicle for private hire purposes other than for executive use (ie normal daily private hire use).
- k) The driver and passenger front side window glass and the front windscreen must be clear. However, tinted windows can be fitted to the side and rear window glass of the vehicle provided that they comply with current legislation.
- l) The exemption will cease to have effect on selling or transferring the vehicle to another party. The person to whom the exemption is granted must inform the council of the sale/transfer of ownership immediately and in writing and provide details of the new owner. The exemption notice must be returned to the Council along with the private hire vehicle identification plate unless being sold to another private hire operator licensed by the Council; in which case, only the exemption notice has to be returned.
- m) A taximeter will not be installed in the vehicle.